Mss. A. 11 v. 7, p. 114 A

Boston, May 10, 1870.

Rev. Henry Ward Beecher:

My Dear Friend—I regret to be obliged to substitute a brief letter for my presence at the mass convention of the American Woman Suffrage Association at Steinway Hall to-morrow; for I had anticipated great pleasure in seeing (many of them for the first time) so strong an array of eminent advocates of equal rights, drawn together by a common inspiration from various parts of the country. But, while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak; hence the cause of my absence.

The claim of woman to the ballot is so reasonable, in such exact conformity to the theory of popular government, and so important in its bearings upon whatever concerns the interests of the people, that I marvel that any man with ordinary intelligence and sense of justice, on giving any consideration to the subject, can resist or

decry it. I have carefully read and weighed all the objections that have been brought against it; but, among them all, I have neither seen nor heard a single one possessing any force whatever. Many of them are so utterly at variance with each other as to be mere jargon; and the remainder of them are marked by such shallowness of reasoning and emptiness of declamation as signally to demonstrate the impossibility of a sound argument being framed against a truly just issue.

No man has written, no man can write more absurdly on the subject than the distinguished author of the work entitled "A Reform against Nature." Yet, while advancing all sorts of preposterous reasons against giving woman the ballot, he sums up all that need be urged in favor of the measure in the following cogent paragraph:

"Little as he means it, man is nevertheless gravitating steadily toward some practice of wrong against the sex; laying

up usages that are oppressive, maxims unjust, laws of really despotic mastership; all, it would seem, because the wrong is in him, and, having the power, must needs be somehow issued in the deed; even though he disavows it, and protests he would not have it."

Yes! "having the power"! Therefore he contemns, subordinates, oppresses! And he is "gravitating steadily" in that direction. It is not a rightful but a usurped power that is thus degrading him and injuring woman, and a "despotic mastership" is the inevitable sequence. The simple remedy for all this injustice is to restore to woman that share of power, especially in matters of legislation, which has been wrested from her; in other words, to concede equal political rights. No class legislation was ever yet just or beneficent. Where all are entitled to a voice and vote in public affairs, there the laws will be the most equitable, and the government the most effective in its administration.

MSA 1151 v.7, p.114A

Dr. Bushnell says:

"Suffrage is a right given, never a right to be demanded because it inheres beforehand in the person; and neither men nor women have any title to it, save what is grounded in considerations of benefit."

Suffrage is a right primarily given — by whom? Where did Hancock and Adams, Washington and Jefferson, revolutionary Federalists and Republicans, Dr. Bushnell and the opposers of woman suffrage generally, get their right to vote? Who gave them authority to choose their own rulers? Women claim no other title to it than men assert for themselves; and that claim is as valid in the one case as it is in the other. It is sure to be accorded in the end, and the sooner the better. No matter how many stubborn or stupid men may resist, nor how many weak-minded or ~~cowardly~~ timorous women may say nay, it will nevertheless be triumphant, adding new lustre to the nineteenth century.

Yours, very cordially, Wm. Lloyd Garrison.